TRUE AND FALSE RITUAL.

TWO SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE

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BY

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TRUE AND FALSE RITUAL.

SERMON I.

I HAVE been asked to speak to you this evening upon Ritual. It is a subject, which at the present day, is attracting a great deal of attention. It is spoken of everywhere; the newspapers are full of accounts of it, men say that the whole appearance of many of our Churches is being completely changed by it,—that you would scarcely recognize the once familiar services. And many are much alarmed by this state of things: they are puzzled and terrified, or even enraged. Others again rejoice at it, point to it, with thankfulness as an outward sign of the increasing life and spirituality of the Church. However they differ in their opinions about this movement, all agree that it is one of great importance for good or evil. No apology, therefore, need be made for making this the subject of our lectures in this place.

First let us define what we mean by Ritual. In speaking of worship, we mean two things—the inward and spiritual service, the worship of the life which S. Paul enjoins when he says (*Rom.* xii. 1,) "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service"—and the solemn outward service of the congregation in prayer and praise, and other acts. In this latter sense there are required some accessories of worship, some way of conducting it. This, of whatever kind it may be, whether very elaborate or as simple as possible, is the Ritual of the worship.

Now with reference to Ritual, there seem to be in the main three views, which I shall endeavour very briefly to describe.

There is, however, a difficulty in doing this; it is hard to describe any views other than one's own. It is easy to caricature others' opinions. This I have no wish to do. I shall try in as few words as possible, to give as far as I understand them—the principal views about the matter:—*First*, there are those who, like the Quakers, think that everything outward in worship is actually opposed to what is inward, and therefore should as far as possible be avoided. *Secondly*, there are others who willingly acknowledge that when persons unite for any common acts, certain rules and regulations are necessary for the preservation of order, and that this is as true of worship as of everything else; therefore they say, some outward rules are necessary, but these are only matters of natural necessity and of *human convenience;* at all events, the furthest they would go, is that they may tend to edification. In the *third* place, there are those who believe nothing connected with divine worship to be of small importance, that the slightest action therein performed has direct reference to God, and should be so thought of; and further they believe that there are certain principles which underlie all worship, and which, when rightly understood and acted upon will produce a true Ritual, not altogether unworthy of Him whom in our worship we endeavour to approach.* It is this last view that I shall try to bring before you and establish on the two occasions on which I am to address you here. The subject will naturally divide

* I think S. Paul may fairly be claimed as one who held and acted most decidedly upon this view. For instance, the question whether women should have their heads covered or uncovered in Church is submitted to him. As many now think, this would be a mere trifling matter of social etiquette—Not so thought the great Apostle. He goes back to first principles, and discusses the mutual relationship of man to woman, and of both to God and Christ.—(1 *Cor.* xi.)

itself into two main parts, viz: The principles and the practice of Ritual. Of these two, the former will occupy most of our attention, as they being settled, it will be comparatively easy for every one by applying them to discern between true and false Ritual.

There can be but little hesitation as to what text of Holy Scripture will be most suitable for a discourse on the principles of Ritual. One immediately suggests itself as giving us the key to the whole matter—

"THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH."—*St. John* i. 14.

That is, rightly to understand the meaning of Ritual, we must consider the doctrine of the Incarnation. Let us do so in humble dependence upon that Holy Spirit by Whose operation that great mystery was wrought, and Who is promised to us by the Incarnate, to be our guide into all truth. Let us endeavour to see what the Incarnation really was, what were its effects.

"In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth," and when He did so, "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." But we let our minds run back, before this time, or rather before all time, when we believe that "there was only God,"—when He, "in the bliss of Majesty, did live and love alone." True, then, in the perfection of His adorable nature, He was perfectly self-sufficient, and in the mystery of the Eternal Trinity, there was ample scope for the exercise of all the divine attributes. Ample scope too for the exercise of that great attribute of love, in the mutual love of the Three Persons of the Adorable Trinity; and so from all Eternity, God was perfect in Himself, blissful, then too He was Love.

But, we believe, in order that His infinite love might have some objects outside of Himself on which it might rest, He called, by His Word, creation into being. "He spake and

it was done." And of this creation, there are two great divisions, the spiritual and immaterial on the one side; on the other the sensible and material. Whether the spiritual was first created, or whether, as some have thought, both were contemporary is not revealed, nor need we ask, it does not concern our argument. One thing we are told, that man was last created. On the one side, lay all the spiritual creation, the Angels and Archangels, the Cherubim and Seraphim, Powers and Thrones, and all the wide range of intelligent spiritual beings. On the other side lay all the world of matter, all that is within the region of sense. And at first these two were, so to speak separate, until God made man, touching with one side of his nature the material world, and with the other the spiritual. His body formed out of the dust of the earth, and then the breath of life breathed into his nostrils, so that man, (whose name signified red earth) became a living soul. And so in the person of man, these two natures, the material and spiritual, were united, he was the keystone which held all together; and so by man, the last created being, all creation was united.*

But something more is still needed. The creation, though itself united, is still apart from, unconnected with its Creator. And God's ineffable love towards His creation will not be satisfied, until by some means it shall be more closely connected with Himself. How shall that be done? The Incarnation is the answer to the question. The Eternal Word, dwelling from all eternity in the bosom of the Father, comes forth from that home, and in the womb of the Blessed Virgin is made man, so that two whole and perfect natures, that is

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* So George Herbert says—

To this life things of sense
Make their pretence;
In th' other Angels have a right by birth:
Man ties them both alone,
And makes them one,
With th' one hand touching Heaven, with th' other earth.

to say, the Godhead and Manhood, are joined together in one person never to be divided.

In the person of man, in the human nature, the spiritual and material were united, and then in the Person of the God-Man, the Creator and His Creation were united, and so the mystery of God's Will was made known, and "in the dispensation of the fulness of time, He gathered together in one *all things* in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him."—(*Eph.* i. 9, 10.) "For it pleased the Father, that in Him should all fulness dwell."—(*Col.* i. 19.) Therefore, by the Incarnation was effected the Redemption and Sanctification of the whole Creation, for remember that "the Creature was made subject to vanity," though it was subjected in hope.—(*Rom.* viii. 20.) Henceforth nothing is to be called common or unclean. S. Peter may "arise, slay and eat of all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts and creeping things, and fowls of the air."—(*Acts* x. 12, 13.) Previous to the Incarnation, only a few animals, only some kinds of appointed materials could be offered to God or employed in His Service; after that great event, everything is sanctified. In all places the Father may be worshipped, and there is neither Jew nor Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free. This, then is the first principle which we deduce from the truth of the Incarnation. The whole creation, material as well as spiritual, has been brought into contact with the Divine nature—has been sanctified—is capable either of worshipping or of being employed in worship, and may claim this as its right.

But there is a further principle of wide-spread application and directly bearing upon our subject, which springs immediately from the Incarnation, and which we must consider somewhat fully. It is this—that now the spiritual, nay more, the Divine acts outwardly and visibly in the region of sense. Let us illustrate, and indeed prove, this statement by

considering the Person of our Blessed Lord—Who He was, and what He did. On the first Christmas night at Bethlehem, there lay in Mary's arms a helpless Babe. The shepherds who came there, *saw* Him with their outward eyes. they *heard* His infant cries, had they so wished they could have *touched* Him with their hands, yet he was God of God, Light of Light, the Very and Eternal God. Up to that time God had dwelt shrouded in the splendours of glory inaccessible; but now the only Begotten has come forth from the bosom of the Father, emptied himself of His great glory, taken upon Him the form of a man—men could see their God. He was visibly present to them, living and working among them. One was *seen* to put forth a hand, and to touch a diseased body, and it was made whole, for that touch was the touch of God. A voice is heard, proceeding from human lips, which cries "Lazarus, come forth." And Death and Hades hear the voice of the Son of God, and give forth their dead, and Lazarus comes forth. The doubting Thomas sees with his bodily eyes, even if he does not touch, the nail prints, and the wounded side, and he says to Him who stood before him there, "my Lord and my God." It was to this time that the Apostle referred, when he wrote—(and weigh well each word as you read,) "*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life. For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.*'—(1 St. John i. 1, 2.)

A human form hid and yet revealed the presence of the Eternal God. A human voice expressed His thoughts, the outward actions of a man revealed God's Will; and so as I have above said, the Divine acted outward and visibly in the region of sense. Now this being so, the world o

sense having become as it were the point of contact of the spirit of man and of God, (for that spiritual effects were and are wrought by the Son of God, by virtue of and through the means of His Incarnation, none who believe the Incarnation will deny,) God acting still (or if you doubt that, having once acted) towards men through the outward and visible, we should surely expect that it would not be wrong that man should through outward acts, or at least with the help of outward acts approach his God. At least this much must be acknowledged, that there is no such antagonism between spirit and matter, as to render outward bodily acts of worship unacceptable to God. Indeed, whatever persons may be driven by their fears and prejudices to say in certain cases, at times all unhesitatingly act upon the principle just enunciated. Think for a moment. What do you do when you say a prayer? When you *speak words* of prayer? do you not make use of certain outward signs (for what else are words) in your approach to God. Why do you do so? Does God need words, can you not "lift up your heart" to Him without them? Nay more, are you not sure that some of your most real and earnest prayers have been offered to God without the intervention of words? And yet would the most ardent anti-ritualist venture to determine to go through his life praying, yet never speaking one word of prayer, because he wished consistently to avoid any approach to outward bodily worship, because he was determined to prevent anything outward coming between his soul and God? Though he knows that words are not absolutely necessary, he is quite sure that they become relatively so to him. An attempt to spiritualize his prayer too much, would probably soon cause him to lose altogether the spirit of prayer. This argument might be pressed even further, but surely no one would question the necessity of using words of prayer, when He taught His disciples, to say, either the words He put into their lips or other like words.

From the doctrine of the Incarnation, we have thus far deduced two truths. (1) That no part of creation (it being all redeemed by union with the Creator) is unfit to be employed in the worship of God. And (2) that there can be no such antagonism between spirit and matter, as to render outward acts of worship unacceptable to God. With reference to this last, we have also seen that it is almost (if not quite) impossible to approach God without outward acts. Now let us turn to Holy Scripture and see if these deductions are supported by what we shall find there. In this, as in every matter, let our appeal be to "the law and to the testimony;" let us like the Beræans, "search the Scriptures and see whether these things are so."—(*Acts* xvii. 11.)

The first truth then to which, in this part of our investigation, I shall call your attention, and which I will ask you to bear in mind throughout all that shall be said, is that so clearly enunciated by our Blessed Lord—"GOD IS A SPIRIT, AND THEY THAT WORSHIP HIM, MUST WORSHIP HIM IM SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH."—(*St. John* iv. 24.) There can be no possible doubt as to the meaning of these plain words. All acceptable worship of God must be spiritual; no unspiritual worship can possibly be acceptable to God, who is a Spirit. We cannot put this too strongly.

But now think—did this first become a truth when Jesus spoke these words at Jacob's well? Certainly not. God always was a Spirit; these words contain an Eternal Truth, necessarily deduced from the very nature of God. Our Lord *revealed* this truth; He did not make it. God is unchangeable. "I am the Lord, I change not." God ever will be, ever was a Spirit, and this premiss being ever unchanged, the same conclusion ever shall, ever must have been true; they that worship Him, they that through all eternity shall worship Him, all who ever have offered Him acceptable worship—the worship of all must be *in*

Spirit and in Truth. "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." We repeat it again, No worship that is unspiritual, ever can be, or *ever can have been* acceptable to God.

But, most unquestionably, any worship which God Himself appointed, either directly or through His servants, cannot have been unacceptable to Himself, cannot *i. e.* have been unspiritual. Let us consider then the worship which God Himself once appointed: if we shall find it ceremonial, ritualistic, we must conclude that such a worship is not unspiritual. There is hardly any necessity to spend time in showing the nature of Jewish worship. That it was eminently ceremonial, all are agreed. Yet just refer for a moment to those chapters of the book of Exodus, the 25th and following, which contain these directions. But first observe the order of the revelation to Moses on Sinai. First the ten commandments; then what may be called municipal regulations, (*Ch.* xxi. & xxii.) laws for men servants, for oxen that gored, for trespasses, and the punishment for various breaches of the moral law. Then there comes (*Ex.* xxii. 9–11) a covenant-feast in the Presence of God, then Moses goes up to the Mount of God, that he may receive tables of stone, a law and commandments which God has written (v. 12); while there the Lord speaks unto Moses, telling him (I quote from the heading of chap. xxv.) "What the Israelites must offer for the making of the tabernacle, the form of the Ark, the ten curtains of the tabernacle, the eleven curtains of goat's hair, &c. &c." Then again in (*Ch.* xxviii.) Holy garments are appointed, the ephod, the breast-plate with twelve precious stones, the embroidered coat, the garments for Aaron's sons. Now observe—God, who is a Spirit, is appointing "accessories of solemn outward worship, a way of conducting worship"—what He appoints must be acceptable to Himself. A most highly ceremonial worship, therefore,

is not necessarily unspiritual. There is, if possible, a still stronger proof of this in ch. xxxi., when the LORD saith, "See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and *I have filled him with the Spirit of God*, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship." Here it is expressly stated in Holy Scripture, that a certain person was directly inspired by the Holy Spirit to enable him to devise cunning works and to work in gold and silver, and in cutting of stones, and in carving of timber. Can such things then be unspiritual?

Now let there be no misunderstanding with reference to this argument from the Jewish ceremonial. I am not maintaining that this ceremonial is in the least degree binding. I do not believe it to be so. It is all done away with, even the moral law comes to us with other and far higher sanctions than it did to the Jews. But the argument here employed, is not in the least degree affected by the complete abolition of this particular worship. Had that worship been appointed for but a single day, a single hour, the argument would still hold. During that single hour (or as the case really is during the whole period from Moses to Christ) the Unchanging God was a Spirit. Yet during that period, by his own appointment, His service was conducted by men clothed in garments made for glory and beauty, and was accompanied by an elaborate Ritual; therefore, such a worship is not unspiritual. If you say that it is, you must either say that God appointed a worship which was not acceptable to Himself, or else, that once God was not a Spirit, and therefore could be worshipped otherwise than in Spirit and in truth.

But now it might be said, that it may be quite true that at one time God would accept such a worship, but that any such is unsuitable for the present dispensation of the Spirit. Although I cannot see any force in this objection, yet it is as well to obviate it as to strengthen our position from Holy Scripture; let us now turn to the last written book in the Bible, written after our Lord's Ascension, after Pentecost, just at the close of the Apostolic period. The writer of that book tells us that he was "in the Spirit" (*Rev.* i. 10) when he received the revelations therein detailed. After the messages to the churches, a door is opened in heaven through which he looks, and hears a voice saying, "come up hither and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter," immediately he is "in the Spirit" ready for the reception of spiritual truth. The revelation of the things to be hereafter, is made, as is well known, in the form of the effects which followed the opening of the seals, the sounding of the trumpets, the pouring out of the vials. The place where this is seen is heaven, and so this place, its occupants, and their employment are first described in *Rev.* iv. & v. The first glance over these two chapters, at once shows that a scene of worship is brought before us, and if the place is heaven, how highly spiritual this worship must be. We are sure that no images unsuitable to express the most exalted idea of spiritual worship will be employed. What then do we find? "A throne was set in heaven, and one sat upon the throne, and he that sat was to look upon as a jasper and sardine stone. And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald, and round about the throne were four and twenty seats, and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiments, and they had on their heads crowns of gold.....and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of

God!" Then comes the description of the living creatures, and we are told that "when they give glory to Him that sitteth upon the throne, the four and twenty elders fell down before him that sat on the throne, and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne." And again when the Lamb had taken the sealed book, "the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them lamps and vials full of odours (margin, incense*) which are the prayers of the saints, and they sung a new song."

Now read carefully over this magnificent description, of which I have only quoted parts, and what do you find about the Ritual of the heavenly worship. A central point of worship, the throne set in heaven, gorgeous colours, the jasper, sardine, rainbow, emerald. White robes for the leaders of the worship, whose seats are around the throne—golden crowns—burning lights—incense—prostrations (they fell) and other acts of bodily worship, such as casting down their crowns—musical instruments and choral songs of adoration and praise. Many of you, if you had seen such outward signs and acts employed in our worship here to-night, would have been startled, perhaps offended. Yet whatever you might have said about it, one thing you could not say, with your Bible open before you: you could not have said that it was unspiritual.

And here again let me specially call your attention to the argument drawn from this portion of Holy Scripture. I do not say that this is a literal description—I know that it is not. The streets of heaven are not paved with gold, it is not a city at all, there are no such things as we here call lights, incense, white robes, songs; all this is readily granted. But what is maintained is this, that after the foundation of

* The word here translated "odours" is translated "incense" in Chap. viii. 3.

the Christian Church, after the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit, there is given a detailed account of a most spiritual worship, which is represented as then being offered in heaven. The Apostle S. John under the guidance of the Holy Spirit desires to convey to men the idea of this worship, for that purpose he employs certain *images* or figures, which are seen to be eminently ceremonial, what would be called ritualistic. These images then certainly are not now unsuitable to express the idea of spiritual worship. God has used these images to express to man the idea of worship; would any one venture to say that it would be wrong, unspiritual, for man to employ these same or like images and acts to express towards God his idea of worship?

Observe I have so far only said, would it be wrong? I am only to-night contending for the admissibility of such acts, that they are not unspiritual, and this is all that I want to insist upon. But I think no humble Bible-loving Christian would be content to stop here. Such a one would I think say—I have certain spiritual ideas of worship, which I desire to express, how can I best do so. No direct regulations are given in the New Testament about the matter, but I find that the Holy Spirit once needed to give expression to these ideas; I cannot be wrong; it will be the safer way, the way of faith and humility, and simplicity, if I adopt the way employed by Him. Who would dare to blame one who so acted?

Why is it that we find a peculiar satisfaction, almost a kind of rest, in telling our wants to God, in the very words of the prayer which our Lord Himself has taught us? We know that we are quite at liberty to use other words, we often must do so; still we feel quite sure when we are saying the Lord's Prayer, that we are using just those words which are best suited to express the deepest devotion, the most earnest intercession. And can we not easily under-

stand, how the Christian Church might well feel that there is a special satisfaction, a special safety in employing that ritual which the Holy Spirit saw to be most suited to show forth a worship of the most exalted and heavenly kind.

But as I have said, this view I do not press. Enough if we have seen to-night one blessed effect of the Incarnation, the redemption of the whole Creation; enough if we have learnt from the way in which God wrought that redemption, that there is harmony, not antagonism, between the seen and unseen. Fortified in these truths by the express teaching of Holy Scripture, and especially by the great revelation of our Lord as to the spirituality of all acceptable worship, we have seen some of the principles which are to guide the Church and individuals in their Ritual. There are others which we must consider next Sunday evening.

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SERMON II.

Last evening was occupied almost altogether in considering the Incarnation, its effects, the truths revealed by it, and in the searching of Holy Scripture to see whether it supported our conclusions. To-night I shall try first to point out two other great principles which are to be our guide in questions of this sort, and then to make some general remarks upon Ritual practices.

Our text will be—

"Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's."—1 *Cor.* vi. 20.

The primary reference of these words is, no doubt, to the first meaning of the term worship which was given at the commencement of these sermons. But evidently they will apply to the second also, viz., the solemn public worship of Almighty God, the subject which we are now considering.

The first words of the text "*Glorify God*" bring, at once, clearly before us, a great principle which we must ever bear in mind when we discuss the subject of worship. And that is—worship must be *unselfish*. Its object is not primarily to do ourselves good, but to glorify God. No doubt our own edification will be greatly advanced thereby, but it is poor, selfish work to have that first in our minds, we might almost say dangerous work. One can hardly help thinking in this connection of our Blessed Lord's words, "He that will save his life shall lose it."

Now unless we clearly understand that the glory of God, and not the edification of man, is the chief end of worship, we shall be completely puzzled when we see anything of a solemn Ritual. The heavenly worship, as told us in the

Book of Revelation, will seem to us very unmeaning, at the best to be a sort of remnant of Judaism in the mind of the Apostle. In fact when men come to the consideration of this subject, having made self the centre, they are acting just as the old astronomers did who tried to explain the motions of the solar system while they made the earth its centre. While they did so, everything seemed to them to be in complete confusion; they could make nothing satisfactory of it. By and bye, a truer philosophy came in, they saw the Sun to be the central point, and then everything at once fell into its proper place and the beautiful harmony and regularity of all the movements of the heavenly bodies were at once discovered. So think of worship, as for self; talk in that selfish way which is so common of "coming to Church to get good" (as if that were to be the first thought in the mind of a Christian worshipper,) and all solemn outward worship will seem frivolous and unmeaning; nay, worse, soon the very idea of worship will be lost altogether. Men will begin to ask of any act, "What good does it do?" meaning what good does it do myself. But believe that in worship you desire to glorify God; and you will strive first of all to lift up your hearts in real adoration, but you will not feel satisfied to rest there, you will not be content that the body, which too has been made partaker of the redemption, and shall be sharer of the glory, should be without its part in the glorifying of God; and the bended knee and the bowed head, will not be mere convenient or idle customs, but solemn acts of reverend worship offered by the Creature to its Creator. And more, if you look around upon this beautiful world of God's, and think, with intense thankfulness, that all has been redeemed and sanctified by the Incarnate, that it too is "saved by hope" as "its earnest expectation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God," (Rom. viii. 19) you will rejoice if you can in any way

employ any of the glory and the beauty of outward things in the glorifying of your God. In this spirit you will not, with grudging suspicion, narrowly scrutinize every ornament of God's House or service, to see if it could not possibly be done without, if it "pays" to use it, whether it does you enough good to make it worth while to employ it; but with a free and generous heart you will love to employ as much as you can of that which God has given you, in the noblest way in which you can use it, in the worship of God.

We said before that worship must be spiritual, now we say let it be unselfish. That is our second principle.

Again our worship must be triumphant and joyous. Whom do we worship? A conqueror, a risen and ascended Lord, one who liveth and was dead, but is now alive for evermore, holding the keys of death and of hades, one who is now in glory in Heaven. Yes, ever let us remember that though not yet, is Jesus acknowledged, as He shall be, though still in His members He suffers, yet, the Agony and the Bloody Sweat, the death and the shame are passed for ever, and He has entered into His glory. The cross has become "The sign of triumph." That cross which was borne before us this evening spoke to us of more than of His death, for it was empty. He was gone from it—His body was taken from the cross and laid in the grave, but there it saw no corruption, for (how joyfully the words sound) "The third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven." Because He Whom she worships is such a triumphant conqueror, the Church's worship *must be triumphant.*

But this is true on her own account also. True, there is always much reason for penitence and for mourning in the Church militant here on earth; and she has seasons, she has services for penitence and mourning. But that must not be all.

"Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days."

and an Apostle bids us "Rejoice evermore" and tells us that the Kingdom of God is "righteousness and *joy* and peace." The prophetic description of the mystic bride is that she "looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners, (*Cant.* vi. 10.) And well may it be so, for the Church through all her sorest conflicts is assured of final victory, we shall be more than conquerors, we march to victory, and we will, we must, shew in our worship that we have the "full assurance of hope." This then, we must bear in mind—Christian worship must be triumphant.

But now it may be said—granting what has been brought forward—you have shown nothing more than that these outward acts are not altogether wrong, but after all is there anything to make us think that they are at all necessary. I think we may now take this step and not so much prove, as see from experience that ritual of some sort is absolutely necessary to worship.

It is unquestionably natural to man, outwardly to express his inner feelings. In fact he has been made as he is that he may do so. Such is the wonderful connection between mind and body, that the countenance, the step, every movement, of the body, the whole appearance, will at once express joy or sorrow. The bright, joyous face, the elastic step or the clouded, gloomy brow, tell their own tale. If a man strive against this, and has such an impassive countenance that it never betrays the least emotion, he is acting unnaturally, no one admires such stoicism, or thinks any the better of him who practises it. Nay, such a one in concealing all that he feels, comes dangerously near being a hypocrite; let him go a step further and put on a gloomy look when happy, or feign satisfaction when displeased and he is one. Should we then desire the Christian Church never to give outward expression to her joyous feelings of

adoration and praise ; shall she be forced into an impassive stoicism or a gloomy hypocrisy? On the contrary " The King's daughter is all glorious within"—*therefore* we say " let her clothing be of wrought gold." (*Psalm* xlv. 13.)

And we must see that men do act upon this principle without the least hesitation whenever they unite for any ordinary object ; they invariably at such times express their feelings by certain outward signs or acts. Look for instance at a funeral—men are supposed then to feel grief ; there are many outward signs of it used.* Or better still, think of what is not unfamiliar to you in this city—a soldier's funeral —What is it that gives it such impressive solemnity ? The mournful music, the reversed arms, the slow march, all these are felt to be suitable to the occasion, to be in harmony with the feelings that a comrade's death may be supposed to occasion. Would it be better to do away with every thing of this sort, to take pains not to express any idea of regret ?

Again take the opposite extreme. On a day of rejoicing when for instance a prince or some honoured personage visits us, how do we receive him? With flags flying, with shouts of joy, with bells ringing, salutes firing. But why all this ? Is not loyalty a matter of the heart, not of the lips ? What good do such things do ourselves or our prince ? Well, what would you think of a city which when its sovereign visited it, gave no sign of joy, each inhabitant going on with his usual avocations, because loyalty was in the heart, not on the lips ?

But not only in such cases as I have just alluded to, do men without fear, nay actually as a duty, give outward expression to their various feelings, but we know that almost all societies formed for moral or charitable objects make great use of ritual. The Good Templars—Sons of Temper-

* I only use this as an illustration, not for an instant wishing to approve of the horrible heathenish ritual with which our funerals are commonly conducted.

ance—national societies—notably the Masonic bodies, have their badges, their dresses, their solemn ceremonies. They do this in obedience to the dictates of that nature which God has created, which he has redeemed, and which is not, in religious matters to be done violence to, but to be sanctified. Fearlessly, then, let the Christian Church encourage men to employ in the service of God, every faculty and power of their nature. And even if the beauty of art, and of music, and all which through the senses can influence the soul, have too often been employed in lower ways,—still let the redeemed people spoil the Egyptians of their jewels of silver and jewels of gold, that with them too they may do sacrifice to the Lord God of Israel.

I ask any candid person, which gives most honour to God, and most fills our heart with joyful thankfulness to Him, to look upon the things of sense as *in themselves necessarily evil*,* and therefore never to employ them in God's service? Or, knowing that all are redeemed, all since cleansed by the Precious Blood, fit to be offered to God, that every part of our nature may be made to minister in spiritual things, and that as God has so made us, that through our senses, our minds and souls can be influenced, therefore to insist upon it that our senses shall be pressed into the good work, and forced, or rather allowed to help us in our approaches to God.

Men never doubt about the principle for an instant in anything, except in their religion; and then only because they are hampered by the very prevalent and very old error, that spirit and matter are opposed to one another. It was just this same mistake that led to the false asceticism of a former period, and to many still greater evils.

We say, then, that not only is a solemn ritual in worship,

* This is in fact just the old Gnostic heresy which so troubled the Church in earlier days.

not unspiritual, but that it is required by man's nature, even when regenerate and sanctified. We will go a step further: *A Ritual of some kind is absolutely necessary*—you never saw a service without it. The Quaker who makes it a rule to keep on his hat, and the Presbyterian who, as a matter of conscience, sits down to sing, are ritualists; they are giving outward expression to an idea. Whether their ritual is true or false I do not say. And so in every service, in all worship, there must be a way of doing it; shall this way be right or wrong? Is it worth thinking about so that we shall be sure or at least try to have it right, or shall we leave it to chance, take up what we have been accustomed to, without asking why or wherefore, and leaving all to haphaszard probably find ourselves with a slovenly, unmeaning or false Ritual. As an illustration let us take one or two instances of what must be done in some way, and will be done either rightly or wrongly.

Probably nearly all agree, that a choir is wanted to lead the music of the service. That being granted, it follows that you must put your choir somewhere. Now which is the best place for them? At the back of the congregation, enthroned in a lofty gallery, as if they had nothing to do with the people nor the people with them? Or placed in the front, (not to sing for the people, but to lead them in singing,) and therefore placed where leaders ought to be.

Again, when men form a company such as a volunteer corps, or any thing of the kind, they generally adopt a suitable uniform; so is it not well, is it not true ritual that your choir, leaders of the Church's worship, should wear a simple and appropriate uniform dress, such as is the white robe? Does it not add to the decency and order, and even to the simple dignity of the Service, that they should do so? It unquestionably is better than the false ritual of worldly pride and display, which is too often to be seen in Church

choirs. The broided hair, and gold, and gay apparel, and all the latest follies and frivolities of the fashions of the day, are much better kept as far out of sight as possible. Choirs that are so dressed are certainly better put away at the back of the congregation. In this matter there is a true and a false Ritual.

But having your choir and having them uniformed, you must get them, in some way to their places. Here again there are two courses—one to let them straggle in, one by one, when they like, some even after the service has commenced ; or that in regular order, when it is time to begin the worship, all should enter together, and reverently take their places. Which of these ways would best fulfil the Apostolic precept ? " Let *all things* be done decently and in order."

Then there is the whole subject of the arrangement of the Church, in which there is room for a great deal of true or false Ritual. I have already spoken of the selfish or the unselfish idea of worship—one or the other of these will, almost certainly be expressed in the Church's arrangement. How often have we gone into a Church where everything gives just the idea of a lecture hall. A large pulpit or platform which is evidently the centre of attraction, arranged with reference to it, often in circular tiers, are the seats for *the audience;* made very comfortable, sometimes gorgeous, with rich carpets and handsome hangings. The whole thing gives the idea of snug worldly comfort, of a fastidious, luxurious congregation who have built *for themselves*, a convenient place in which they may sit and hear preaching.* It is to this miserable selfishness that the grand idea of WORSHIPPING GOD has degenerated. There is another way of

* I do not wish at all to disparage the ordinance of preaching, the pulpit should have its honored place—I am protesting strongly against the false Ritual of so arranging a Church as to make it look as if built *for ourselves.*

arranging a Church. There may be, as there is in heaven, a central point of *worship*, around it are placed the leaders of the worship, while everywhere in window and arch and aisle, there is as much of beauty and ornament as possible, so as to do honour to the house which we have built for our God, not for ourselves. But we need not spend words upon this. Any one can tell in an instant upon entering a Church, whether man's comfort or God's glory is the idea which they who built have expressed; whether it is intended primarily as a place in which we are to listen to a man, or as a place in which we are to worship God.

These are but two or three instances of the way in which the principles already laid down may be applied. Bearing them in mind, any point of ritual may be considered, and it will not be difficult to form a correct conclusion about it.

But now there are one or two warnings which it seems well to give about this whole subject. The first, and a most necessary one, against unreality in Ritual. All along we have been considering outward acts as expressions of inward feelings, and pleading for their admissibility or necessity because they are so. When they are *mere externals*, adopted and used for show they become unmeaning shams. Upon this point we cannot be too strong. If we build our Churches to express the idea that we desire to honour and worship God, this should certainly make us the more careful to see that *by our lives* we honour Him, that we offer that living, acceptable service which He also demands. It is well to bow the head at the name of Jesus, that in this way we may worship Him for His adorable humility; but remember, this is but an outward expression of the heart's adoration, if that be wanting the other is the very extreme of false, unmeaning, sham, ritualism. In fact in this as in everything thing else, the form should never be valued at all for its own sake. What we should do is this—

bend all our efforts to deepen the true spirituality of the heart, to see that all there be real, and then to allow these deep real feelings to find their natural expression either in the commanded or the voluntary acts of devotion. There seem to be two errors about this matter; the first that of true hearts whose devotional feelings are deep and real, but who from various prejudices and fears, will not allow themselves outwardly, as would be natural, to express these feelings in the way in which the Catholic Church has always encouraged or enjoined. And so they lose not a little; and spoil the perfect harmony of their worship, and unintentionally do dishonour to one part of their redeemed nature. May God give to all such as are thus true of heart, to enjoy in their worship all the glorious liberty of the children of God. Then there is the far worse error, nay more the grievous sin of those, who are taken with certain externals, and from love of show, or desire of singularity, or of a pretty effect, perform acts which are most solemn without any real feeling at all in the matter. May God convert such souls as these and give them true spirituality, that their outward devotion may be an index of real feeling. For he surely has the right way, who, when God has given him, true loving adoration of Jesus, feelings of deep reverential worship; loves to honour God by expressing these to Him in every possible way; first of all by a life of holiness, and then by all reverent demeanor, by every outward act, when engaged in the great duty of the immediate worship of God. May God grant to His whole Church, every part of it, every individual member of it, to know and practise this the good and the right way. This is our first warning.

Our second is against *superstition* about Ritual. Many are inclined in these days to make a great deal too much of ritual observances. This may be done in two ways. It is done by those who put any reliance for their salvation in

these outward acts. But this is not the most common way in which, among us, this superstition shows itself. If we hear of one who thinks that because he carries a cross round his neck, he is certainly "bearing his cross after Christ," though he has never crucified one evil desire, or of one whose worship never goes beyond a head bowed or a knee bent, and who trusts to these for his salvation, we can readily enough denounce such superstition, we say such a one makes too much of ritual. And we say rightly. But now are we not just as superstitious, just as surely making too much of ritual observances, if we attribute such vast importance to them as to say that they must utterly mar all worship, and make it unacceptable to God, if we judge our brother most harshly about these things, and at once decide that they are absolutely wrong? Can we not say that some of these things are indifferent. Your brother who is alongside of you reverently bows his head to worship the Trinity, or unostentatiously and devoutly crosses himself to remind himself of his Lord's Passion and his own baptismal sign. Will you be so superstitious about the effect of these acts, as to think that God will not accept your brother's worship because so accompanied. He has no right to find fault with you for not so doing. What right have you to find fault with him for so doing? These things are not saving ordinances—most true. But neither are they damning actions as some would seem to make them. But to such an extent is this superstition about ritual grown, that if a choir come reverently into God's House, with a cross carried before them, it will be said that this would justify a layman in losing all confidence in a clergyman who had taken part in such a procession. It has actually come to this, that a hymn may be perfectly acceptable to Almighty God if the singer stands still while singing it; but if he should venture to begin to walk and sing, it becomes a terrible abomination to

be denounced at the street corners by self constituted judges and accusers of their brethren. Against this superstition about ritual let us most emphatically protest. It is the duty of every minister of the Gospel to lift up, in these dangerous days, a warning voice against such exceeding want of charity, and to ask with the indignant Apostle, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand." (*Rom.* xiv. 4.)

True while thus claiming Christian liberty and the right properly to exercise private judgment about these matters, it is not said that every one may do just as he pleases. Ritual observances are of two kinds, general and congregational, or special and personal. The former, "every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change and abolish," and it is the part of loyal obedience to accept these without scruple, "for whosoever through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly." (*Art.* xxxiv.) Such are these, which the Church of England has ordained of kneeling to pray, bowing at the name of Jesus, standing to sing; also the ornaments of the Church, and of the ministers, at all times of their ministration, and various ritual acts.* Without going into any details about these, or pronouncing any opinion upon points which may soon be questioned, I would say this much, that unquestionably the lawful† ritual of the Church of England, is fuller and more ceremonial than what we see commonly practised in most of our Churches. I feel quite confident that any one who

* *e. g.* The sign of the cross in Baptism,—giving the ring at Holy Matrimony, &c., &c.

† The term "lawful" may mean either permitted or commanded by law. I believe the statement above to be true for both meanings of the word."

examines this question must come to that conclusion. To pronounce an opinion without at all examining the question (confessedly a difficult one) is not a sign of either modesty or candour.

Besides these acts of the congregation, there may be of course many personal acts about which every Christian must under the guidance of an enlightened conscience judge for himself; but about which he has no possible right to judge for his brother.

We have now spent some time during two evenings in considering this subject of ritual, it is not a matter of first importance, but it is connected with the worship of God, it occupies the minds of many at the present time. And we must remember that it is closely connected with many great truths of the Christian faith. These truths give life to these outward forms, and make them something more than mere forms. By a few words about them, or rather about the Catholic faith in its perfection, I would close the subject. Some of you, it may be many, have accepted in all its fullness the teaching of the Catholic Church, and know its power and its blessings. Hold fast by it, live by it, and by your lives of holiness, humility and Christian love, draw others to what you have found, to Him who is thereby so clearly revealed. Some of you want it, you feel your need of more than you have yet found. There has been too much of coldness and distance and unreality in your past faith and love; but you are beginning to hear a voice call you on to something better, obey that call, your heart tells you to do so, it will lead you where you would be, "My heart hath talked of Thee." "Seek ye my Face." "Thy Face, Lord will I seek."

To the ever-blessed Trinity be given all honour and praise, world without end. *Amen.*